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APPLY

January 10, 1975

~~SECRET/CODEWORD (XGDS)~~INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT

FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER HK MR

SUBJECT: Current Egyptian/Soviet Relations

Background to the Brezhnev Visit

For the past year, the relationship between Egypt and the Soviet Union has ranged from correct to cold. Each country has seen reason to react against the policies of the other -- the Soviets, by withholding arms from Egypt which has continued to pursue the US settlement initiative to the exclusion of the USSR; the Egyptians, by continuing to keep the Soviets out of settlement efforts and by working against Soviet influence in the Middle East. Sadat took the position that the relationship could not be normalized except by Soviet agreement to meet Egyptian military needs, and that if Brezhnev wanted to discuss this with him it would have to be in Cairo (Sadat went to Moscow four times between 1970 and 1972, without a reciprocal visit by the Soviet leader.) The Soviets would not agree to play the Egyptian game and refused both arms and a Brezhnev visit.

Recently, however, and in part because of mutual needs, both countries have moved to improve the relationship. Fahmy has been to Moscow twice during the past eight months, emerging from his last visit, in November, with an agreement by Brezhnev to meet with Sadat in Egypt. The advantages the Egyptians expected from a visit by Brezhnev would have been the resumption of military supply, new agreements on assistance, and the rescheduling of the massive debt owed by Egypt for past Soviet assistance, both military and economic. For the Soviet Union, a visit by Brezhnev would have increased Soviet visibility and prestige in the Arab world at a time when US settlement efforts appeared to be faltering -- and possibly lead to a weakening of Egypt's relationship with the West, and in particular, the US. Brezhnev would also presumably have hoped

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that the visit could result in the more substantial participation by the Soviet Union in the settlement process, perhaps at Geneva, and the legitimization of a post-settlement Soviet role in the Middle East.

Now, however, the visit has been postponed. Available evidence supports the credibility of Brezhnev's illness since December 26, but not necessarily one so serious as to cause the postponement of a visit three weeks in advance. Regardless of the degree of illness, political reasons may have contributed to the deferral of Brezhnev's visit. In late December, the Soviets asked for a high-level Egyptian delegation to go to Moscow to discuss outstanding matters. Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmy and newly-appointed War Minister Gamasy departed Cairo for meetings with Soviet leaders on December 28. It may be that their presence was requested in Moscow so that the postponement of Brezhnev's trip would not in itself further damage the Egyptian/Soviet relationship.

Implications of Fahmy Visit to Moscow

An analysis of recent reports reflects that the basic differences of view between Cairo and Moscow on US/Egyptian relations and the conduct of the settlement process continue. Thus Brezhnev may have judged that the USSR could not obtain enough from Sadat (e.g. return of Soviet advisors expelled in 1972; immediate move to Geneva) to risk a visit, at least not until it is clearer whether or not U.S. efforts will produce a second-stage Egypt-Israel agreement.

Nevertheless, what we know of the Fahmy visit to Moscow indicates that the two countries may have decided to enter a new phase of their bilateral relations. A long period of Soviet unhappiness with Egypt for pursuing the U.S. settlement initiative to the exclusion of Soviet interests, and of Egyptian coolness toward Moscow's retribution of denying military supplies to Egypt while lavishing them (including MIG-23's) on Syria, Iraq and Libya, has apparently ended. The tone of the public and private remarks by both Egyptians and Soviets is warm -- although contrived, as if to show that a visit by Brezhnev was not necessary to normalize matters -- and both are currently expressing great satisfaction with Fahmy's visit.

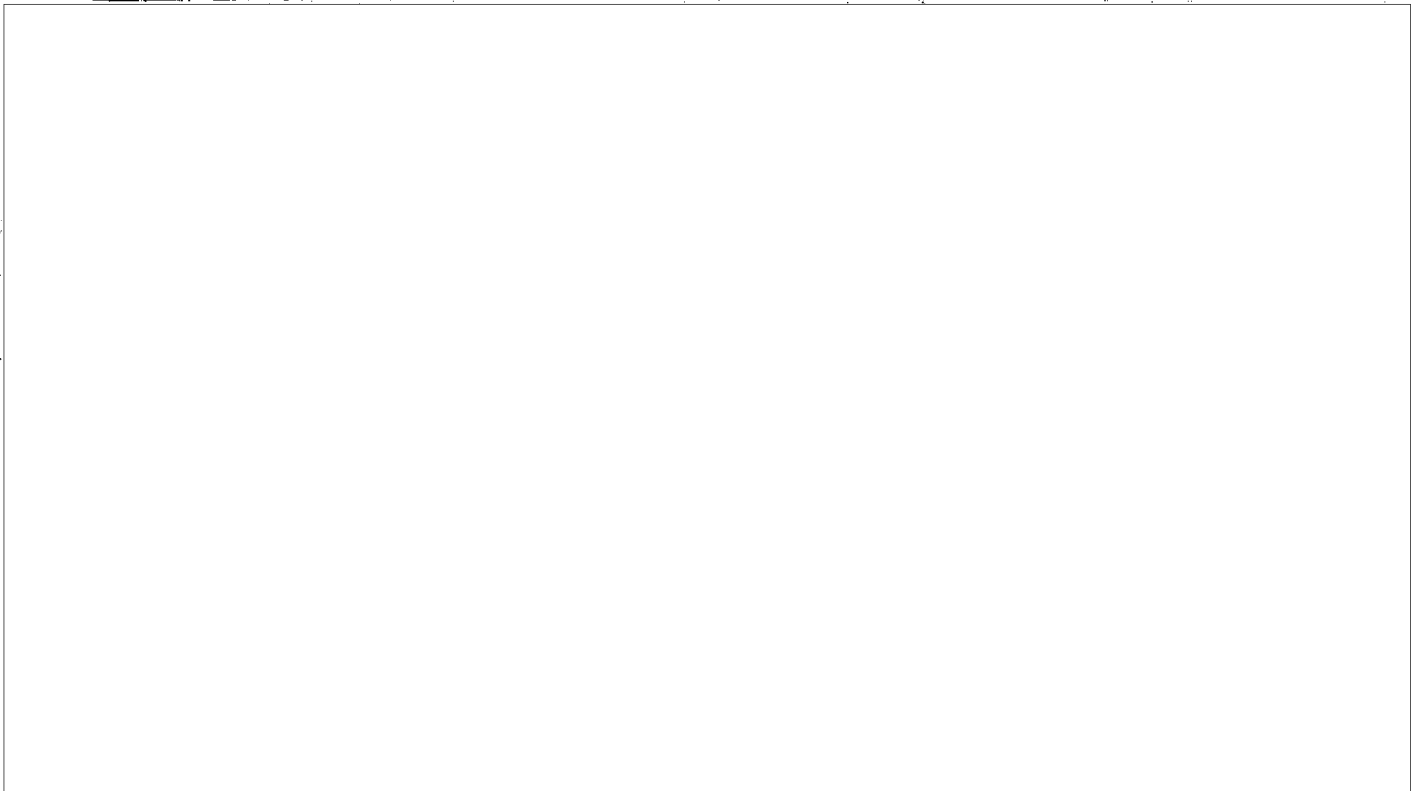
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In the end, the Soviets may have decided that a resolution of the military arms issue and, possibly, of technical assistance matters would suffice for the moment. With this enticement, which Egypt so badly needed, they could afford to play safe and postpone further action (e.g. debt rescheduling, a Brezhnev visit) in the hope that time and events will work in their favor. If there is no Egyptian/Israeli second-stage agreement, military and political tension will mount in a matter of months, US influence and settlement hopes will decline, and the USSR can envisage Egypt agreeing to major concessions in order to obtain greater military and political support.

The Arms Package



Implications of the Arms Package

Military

To an extent dependent upon the amount of equipment, ammunition and weapons provided, this deal will upgrade the qualitative and quantitative capability of the Egyptian army to sustain combat with Israel. In aircraft alone, the deal constitutes an increase of 25% (from 16 to 20) in high performance jet squadrons, and Egyptian MIG-23 pilots

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will have an improved capability versus their Phantom--and Mirage-equipped Israeli counterparts. Perhaps most important, large-scale missile deliveries, both ground-to-air and anti-tank, would considerably increase the Egyptian Army's ability to endure a combat environment against the heavy use by Israel of aircraft and mechanized forces. Reports received thus far have not indicated any military concessions Egypt may have given for a renewed Soviet arms supply.

Political

Egypt

For Egypt and the Arab World, the arms package is politically important no matter what the total amounts or delivery schedules may turn out to be. This is the first such major agreement between Egypt and the Soviet Union since the October War, and the arms agreement contains some high-visibility items which Egypt has wanted for more than three years but which the USSR heretofore refused to supply (it was this refusal which led Sadat to ask the Soviets to remove their military personnel from Egypt in July 1972). It has also been a point of considerable concern to the Egyptian Army, which has seen its capability to fight degraded while that of Israel has improved; moreover, Egyptian military planners have had to endure the humility of inadequate supply while their counterparts in Syria and Iraq have been the objects of Soviet generosity. A resumed supply will remove some of the pressure Sadat has been under from his military for these reasons, and enhance confidence in his leadership -- at least for the time being.

Israel

Whatever the political impact of the military agreement on Egypt and the Arab World, the effect on Israel will be considerable when the details become known. The Israelis will be highly disturbed by its implications, both for the potential upgrading of Egypt's military capability and for its signalling of a deepening commitment between Egypt and the USSR. This must be expected to have an effect on Israel's attitude toward negotiations. It will also have an effect on the urgency and vigor with which Israel presses for a firm US commitment to deliver and finance new arms, both in terms of sophisticated individual items and the entire multi-year MATMON-B plan.

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The Impact on Negotiations

The joint Soviet-Egyptian statement issued at the end of Fahmy's visit to Moscow noted that both sides "strongly believe that the Geneva Conference should resume its work as soon as possible." There was no commitment to the immediate resumption of the Geneva talks, however, and the implication was clear that present US settlement efforts have not been excluded.

Already Fahmy has told Ambassador Eilts he is thinking about scenarios "which might be used to give them (USSR) a sense of being brought in" to the negotiating process. Already a new complication has been added to the negotiating process on the Egyptian side although it probably can be handled.

Israeli attitudes toward negotiations will certainly stiffen, at least tactically, because of the negative impact of the arms package, despite the mitigating factors of Brezhnev cancelling his visit and continued Egyptian adherence to the step-by-step process. One of the points in Allon's list of Egyptian concessions for a second-stage Sinai agreement was no new arms deal with the USSR. This may well have been a deliberately exaggerated demand, since Israel could not logically expect Sadat to continue indefinitely to deprive his army of new weapons. However, we must expect it to be a live issue and find a means to deal with it where Israel's negotiating posture is concerned. (Past Israeli performance indicates that more military assistance from us might be regarded by Israel as a compensating factor.) Much depends upon how much public stress the Israeli Government decides to give in Israel and abroad to the two most visible elements of the postponed Brezhnev visit -- the arms package and the postponement itself.

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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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INFORMATION
January 2, 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR:

SECRETARY KISSINGER

FROM:

ROBERT B. OAKLEY *RB*

SUBJECT:

Memorandum to the President on
Egyptian/Soviet Relations

Attached is the memorandum for the President which you requested on the subject of Egyptian/Soviet relations following the postponement of Brezhnev's trip to Cairo and the visit by Fahmy and Gamasy to Moscow. It is based on a number of good State, reports. However, we are only in the preliminary analysis stage without enough concrete facts to warrant hard-and-fast conclusions.

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